

In the claims:

Please amend claims 2-5 and 7-9 as follows:

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2. The method as defined in Claim 1, wherein reacting a chemical composition with at least one monolayer of said upper surface comprises:

providing a nitrogen-containing composition;

heating said first dielectric upper layer; and

exposing said upper surface to said nitrogen-containing composition to form a chemical reaction compound having a higher resistance to oxidation than said electrically conductive film.

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3. The method as defined in Claim 1, wherein forming a second dielectric upper layer over said electrically conductive film and said first dielectric upper layer comprises *in situ* depositing said second dielectric upper layer over said electrically conductive film and said first dielectric upper layer while simultaneously reacting said chemical composition with at least one monolayer of said upper surface.

4. The method as defined in Claim 1, wherein forming a second dielectric upper layer over said electrically conductive film and said first dielectric upper layer comprises *in situ* depositing said second dielectric upper layer over said electrically conductive film and said first dielectric upper layer after reacting said chemical composition with at least one monolayer of said upper surface.

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5. The method as defined in Claim 1, wherein reacting said chemical composition with at least one monolayer of said upper surface forms a passivation layer upon said upper surface of said electrically conductive film.

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7. The method as defined in Claim 6, wherein the passivation layer upon the upper surface has a thickness in a range from about 2 Å to about 20 Å.

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8. The method as defined in Claim 6, wherein reacting said chemical composition with said at least one monolayer comprises forming a passivation layer upon said upper surface that is adsorbed onto said at least one monolayer.

9. The method as defined in Claim 6, wherein said passivation layer is formed by the steps comprising:

forming a first layer by chemically reacting components of said chemical composition and said at least one monolayer; and

forming a second layer by adsorbing portions of said chemical composition onto said first layer.

Please add the following new claims:

26. A method according to claim 1, wherein said chemical composition comprises nitrogen-containing silane.

27. A method according to claim 6, wherein said chemical composition comprises nitrogen-containing silane.